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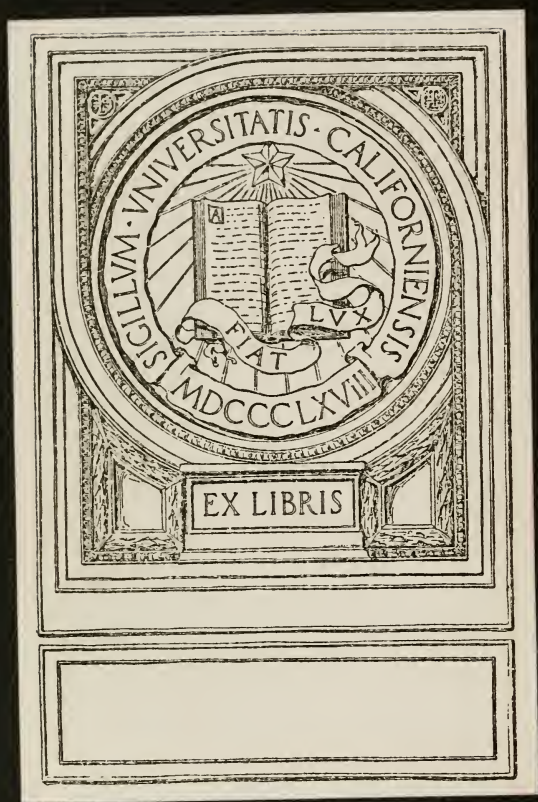
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# THE WAR

*ITS HISTORY AND ITS MORALS*

## A LECTURE

BY

A. F. POLLARD, M.A., LITT.D.

FELLOW OF ALL SOULS' COLLEGE, OXFORD

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH HISTORY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.

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AIRBORNE

THE following pages represent the substance of a lecture delivered from notes at University College on 5 October last, and repeated in London and elsewhere from Exeter to Newcastle-on-Tyne. I have been induced to write out and publish the gist of what I said by requests from various quarters.

A. F. P.

*January, 1915.*





## THE WAR: ITS HISTORY AND ITS MORALS.

It has often been remarked, from the time of Aristotle downwards, that, while the occasions of great events may be trivial, the causes are always profound. This distinction between occasions and causes must ever be borne in mind when we attempt to trace the origin of the Great War of 1914. Occasions for war we have always with us; they are as plentiful as the microbes infesting the air we breathe; and, just as our individual health depends, not upon the possibility of avoiding microbes, but upon the general state of our body, so the preservation of the world's peace depends, not upon the absence of occasions for war, but upon the condition of mind in which the peoples and governments of the earth confront them. We are not at war because an archduke was murdered, but because that occasion for war burst upon one or two powers not disinclined to break the peace. If we can account for the bellicose attitude of Germany and Austria in July, 1914, we can understand the outbreak of war; for, if it is true that it takes two to make a quarrel, it is truer that it takes two to keep the peace.

The main problem, therefore, resolves itself into the question, Why was Germany not anxious to avoid a war? Austria may almost be eliminated from this discussion, because it is clear from the official correspondence that Austria, if left to herself, would have found a means of escape from the dilemma; and, indeed, war between her and Russia did not begin until five days after its declaration by Germany, while six days more elapsed before war began between Austria and France and Great Britain. The ultimate cause of the war

must be sought in Germany's frame of mind, and that frame of mind I propose to illustrate chiefly by means of two books, Prince von Bülow's "Imperial Germany" and Bernhardt's "Germany and the Next War". The ex-Chancellor's volume is a moderate exposition of German policy which probably represents the mind—perhaps the better mind—of the German Foreign Office before the outbreak of war. Bernhardt's book represents that of the military party whose aggressiveness may have had something to do with Bülow's resignation, and certainly got the better of the Kaiser's less truculent inclinations. It is a book which many of us have been reading with what patience we could command, and perhaps also with this amount of comfort—that nothing done by Germany since the war began has done more to compromise her moral position than this revelation of Prussian mentality written in time of peace, before the first Balkan war or even the Agadir crisis had ruffled the surface of affairs.

As Prince von Bülow points out<sup>1</sup> with some humour, it is a German foible to deduce the most paltry propositions from first principles, and members of the Reichstag habitually base amendments to legislation on their "Conception of the Universe". So General von Bernhardt's politics are deduced from what he believes to be "Nature". It is a crass and crude philosophy, and I confess to being bewildered by the praise lavished upon the cleverness and profundity of his book. According to it the German's "nature" is simply the nature of the brute, "red in tooth and claw". The moral part of man is no part of his nature, and the natural state is that state of war, depicted by Hobbes, in which the two cardinal virtues are force and fraud. Bernhardt is thinking, of course, only of the relations between State and State, and not of those between man and man; but between States there can be no law and no morality; their relations are simply those of one brute to another. This is a conception

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 128-9.

not confined to German minds, and it may be worth while pointing to some of the confusions on which it rests.

In the first place there is nothing more "unnatural," in this sense of the word, than the State itself. It depends for its very existence upon the repression and control of those "natural" and predatory instincts, to which Bernhardi would give the freest scope in international relations; and it is a contradiction in terms to apply "natural" psychology to the relations of "unnatural" associations. Moreover, when brute fights with brute, it is a small matter; the force employed and the damage done are on a limited scale. No brute could mobilize four million fellows. It would, indeed, be a horrible comment on civilization if, now that Governments can control millions of men and the forces of nature, they could exert no more control over their "natural" instincts than the beasts of the field. As a matter of fact, this vast control over others and over physical force has only been made possible by man's control of himself, that is to say, by his moral development. But while Bernhardi apparently regards man's control over physical forces as a "natural" evolution, he rules out from man's "nature" his moral growth. His State is a super-brute, ever growing in strength, but never developing even the rudiments of a conscience in its dealings with other States.

"It is proposed," he writes with scorn, "to obviate the great quarrels between nations and States by Courts of Arbitration—that is, by arrangements. A one-sided, restricted, formal law is to be established in place of the decisions of history. The weak nation is to have the same right to live as the powerful and vigorous nation. The whole idea represents a presumptuous encroachment on the natural laws of development."<sup>1</sup> He admits that "Christian morality is based on the law of love," but contends that "this law can claim no significance for the relations of one country to another, since its application to politics would lead to a conflict of duties".<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bernhardi, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

The logic of this is apparently that Christian morality may bind you to love a personal enemy, but not a friend who belongs to an enemy country. But men's assumptions are more eloquent than their assertions, and the assumption underlying the last phrase I have quoted is truly enlightening. Duty to the State is clearly to be paramount; any other loyalty, such as respect for religion, truth, or morality, if it involves conflict with the State, is so small a matter that it can have "no significance". It would disparage the great Florentine to call the German general with an Italian name "the new Machiavelli"; but he will not have lived in vain, if he has unwittingly revealed the pitfalls of the gospel of efficiency and of the worship of the State.

The profound immorality of his political philosophy is more than idiosyncrasy. It is characteristic, I do not say of the German people, but of the Prussian aristocracy which controls the German Government. It is perhaps far-fetched to trace, as a German Catholic has done,<sup>1</sup> the moral insensibility of Prussia back to the union of a renegade Grand Master of the Teutonic Order and his fellow-celibates with the lowest of the Wendish women they were supposed to protect from the infidel; but the Hohenzollerns are the lineal descendants of the man who perverted his religious trust into a secular duchy, and the Junker class in Prussia is sprung from those who followed his example. Courage and military capacity they have shown throughout their history, but of moral scruple or enlightenment there has not been a vestige; and their blunders in this war have all been due to inability to realize moral values—failure to comprehend the moral strength of the British Empire, the moral effect of the subordination of international law to military advantage, the difference which moral change has wrought between the Russia of the Manchurian adventure and the Russia of to-day, and even the courage which the infliction of wrong would give the army of little Belgium. The advo-

<sup>1</sup> See *Der Untergang des Ordenstaates Preussen*, von Dr. J. Vota. Mainz: Kirchheim & Co., 1911.

cates of *schrecklichkeit* cannot comprehend the proverb that in war he wins who feels the pity of it, and their defeat will be due to their moral infidelity.

War is, indeed, to Bernhardi not a cruel necessity but the glorious crown of human achievement. "Efforts to secure peace are extraordinarily detrimental to the national health so soon as they influence politics. . . . The efforts directed towards the abolition of war must not only be termed foolish, but absolutely immoral, and must be stigmatized as unworthy of the human race. . . . War is not merely a necessary element in the life of nations, but an indispensable factor of culture, in which a truly civilized nation finds the highest expression of strength and vitality."<sup>1</sup> To abolish war would, he thinks, be to abolish heroism. This again is one of those simple but fatal fallacies which deceive other than German minds. War provides opportunities for heroism; therefore it is a noble thing. The heroism, it may be remarked, is commonly shown, not by those who order the wars, but by those who obey: "theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die". The heroism is good, the opportunity may be evil. If war provides opportunities, so does the loss of a "Birkenhead," a mine-disaster, or a fire. Bernhardi is in the logical and moral position of those who would wreck a ship, explode a mine, or commit arson in order to provide opportunities for other people to prove their heroism; and the proper place for such criminals is the jail or the lunatic asylum. Evil is none the less evil because it requires heroic remedies.

The German conception of war is, however, less detestable than the German conception of peace. Peace is to them merely preparation for war; it is war underhand, with its armies of spies, abusing international hospitality and acquiring as guests a knowledge to be used as foes, and with its hostility veiled only until *der Tag* shall come. The idea of goodwill among men—at least among States—has escaped their moral

<sup>1</sup> Bernhardi, pp. 14, 28, 29, 34.



ken. "The English attempts at a *rapprochement*," wrote Bernhardi in 1911,<sup>1</sup> "must not blind us to the real situation. We may at most use them to delay the necessary and inevitable war until we may fairly imagine we have some prospect of success." Even the sober Bülow declares that "there is no third course. In the struggle between nationalities one nation is the hammer and the other the anvil."<sup>2</sup> That is in peace, and to the "peaceful" rivalry of States the German would extend the immoral licence that all is fair in war. "You will always be fools," wrote a candid German officer to an English friend, "and we shall never be gentlemen." It is more significant that the German would rather be no gentleman than a fool, while the Englishman would rather be a fool than not a gentleman. The one would rather break the rules than lose the game; the other would rather lose the game than break the rules. "Law," says von Bülow,<sup>3</sup> "must certainly not be considered superior to the needs of the State;" and the problem before the civilized world, during and after this war, is how to deal with a parvenu, who declines to observe any rules in the society into which he has thrust his unwelcome presence.

The German, indeed, denies the foundations of international comity; the weak State has no claim to respect nor right of existence. "The whole discussion turns," says Bernhardi, "not on an international right, but simply and solely on power and expediency";<sup>4</sup> and the expediency is not the interest of mankind, but that of a single over-mighty State. Germany must obey the "natural laws of development," and any attempt to restrain it by efforts to abolish war would be "immoral". So far as the State is concerned, "morality" is thus identical with "nature," and "nature" with the absence of a moral code. If the State can seize its neighbour's vineyard, it would be immoral because unnatural to refrain.

But what is the "State," in the interests of which Chris-

<sup>1</sup> Bernhardi, p. 287.

<sup>2</sup> Bülow, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 178.

<sup>4</sup> Bernhardi, p. 112.

tianity is to be abrogated, morality abolished, and all these vast assumptions made? The question is of some importance, because the Prussian conception of the State is totally different from the English, and also because it appears at first sight psychologically inexplicable that a nation like the German, moral in its private relations, should so emphatically repudiate moral restraint on international conduct. The explanation lies in the German conception of the State. To the Englishman the State is the community organized for political purposes, and he feels, dimly perhaps, that he can apply to himself the aphorism attributed to Louis XIV and say *l'État, c'est moi*. To the German, on the other hand, the State is a thing apart from the community; it is not the community, and though German Social Democrats hold that the State exists for the community, the governing classes believe that the community exists for the benefit of the State. To all alike the State is something abstract, so abstract indeed that German political philosophers have gravely discussed the question whether it is male or female. To their captains and their kings the abstraction is more concrete. The Kaiser's view of the State is that of Louis XIV, and von Bülow avows that "Prussia is in all essentials a State of soldiers and officials".<sup>1</sup> It is not the community as a whole; and nothing surprises an Englishman more than the violent contrast between the overweening claims, which Bernhardi and his fellows make for the State, and their contempt for the political capacity of the German people. It is not in the interests of the German people that the State is to be liberated from moral restraints, but in the interests of those who control the Government. With that the people have nothing to do: Germany has reached the stage of constitutional development that England had reached under the first two Stuarts, and German ministers hold with Charles I that the "true liberty" of German subjects "consists not in the power of Government".<sup>2</sup> There is thus nothing

<sup>1</sup> Bülow, p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Gardiner, *Select Documents*, ed. 1889, p. 285.

illogical in the incongruity between the morality of the German people and the immorality of the German State; for the people have nothing to do with the State.

Their political incompetence is, indeed, the dogma upon which the Government founds its claim to irresponsibility, and there is a close psychological connexion between the irresponsibility to the German people, which the Government has always enjoyed, and the irresponsibility to moral considerations which it claims. "No people," says Bernhardi,<sup>1</sup> "is so little qualified as the German to direct its own destinies." "Despite the abundance of merits," is von Bülow's minor refrain,<sup>2</sup> "and great qualities, with which the German nation is endowed, political talent has been denied it. . . . We are not a political people. . . . I once had a conversation on this subject with the late Ministerial Director Althoff. 'Well, what can you expect,' replied that distinguished man in his humorous way, 'We Germans are the most learned nation in the world and the best soldiers. We have achieved great things in all the sciences and arts; the greatest philosophers, the greatest poets and musicians are Germans. Of late we have occupied the foremost place in the natural sciences and in almost all technical spheres, and in addition to that we have accomplished an enormous industrial development. How can you wonder that we are political asses? There must be a weak point somewhere.'" No doubt these eminent men, in confessing the political incompetence of the German people, made mental exceptions in favour of themselves; but students of recent German policy and diplomacy may feel some doubt about the reservations.

After such frank admissions, it may seem superfluous to inquire into the reasons which led the German people to accept or acquiesce in so fatuous and immoral a political philosophy as that expounded by the organs of the German military staff. A stupid political philosophy would naturally

<sup>1</sup>Bernhardi, p. 113.

<sup>2</sup>Bülow, p. 106.



commend itself to a politically stupid people. Nevertheless, the future will probably show that the Prussian Junker and his chosen ministers have counted too much upon the political incapacity of the German nation. This philosophy is a Prussian and not a German product; the Prussians are German in little save language, and German subservience to Prussian ideas is a temporary lapse to which the result of the war will almost certainly set a term. It none the less requires an explanation; for there are always two factors in the production of every crop. There is the seed, and there is the soil. The most pernicious, as well as the most beneficent, ideas have no effect unless they fall on fruitful ground; and we have to examine the conditions which rendered the German mind receptive soil for the teaching of Treitschke, to whom the pre-dominant school of political philosophy owes its inspiration.

The inquiry involves a brief excursion into history. Before the French Revolution there were some 300 practically independent States in Germany; and even the vast reduction and simplification effected during the Napoleonic era still left thirty-nine in existence after the battle of Waterloo and the Congress of Vienna. The problem for Germany in the nineteenth century was to combine these separate and often hostile States into a single political entity. Political methods of union were tried, and failed. "The union of Germany," writes von Bülow,<sup>1</sup> "that the patriotic democrats of the forties conceived in the nineteenth century was . . . to vest the unifying power in the paramount influence of an imperial Parliament. . . . It was a mistake in a thoroughly monarchical country like Germany to expect unifying power from Parliamentary life which had no existence." Bismarck then appeared on the scene with his methods of blood and iron, and Bülow thus sums up his achievement: <sup>2</sup> "With incomparable audacity and constructive statesmanship, in consummating the work of uniting Germany, Bismarck left out of play the political capabilities of the

<sup>1</sup> Bülow, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

Germans, in which they have never excelled, while he called into action their fighting powers, which have always been their strongest point." This sounds plausible enough ; stripped of the phraseology, with which Bülow has gilded Bismarck's policy, it comes to this : he made aggressive war on other people because he could not trust the political capacity of his own. Denmark, Austria, and France were the successive whetstones on which Bismarck sharpened the sword of Prussian militarism, the weapon wherewith he wrought that German unification which had defied the political efforts of the German people. What wonder that Germany puts its trust in the God of Battles, believes in the methods of blood and iron, and drops all pretence to popular government whenever the bugle sounds ?

Blood and iron became the cement of the German Empire ; but Bismarck, to do him justice, never regarded his methods as ideal. He adopted them only because there were none other available. His pigmy successors have out-Bismarcked and caricatured his methods. They advocate war, not as a legitimate means when others have failed, but as a method in itself almost ideal, or at least preferable to all others. Bernhardi, for instance,<sup>1</sup> glories in his belief that all the wars of his hero, Frederick the Great, were aggressive, and contends that the value to Prussia and Germany of Silesia consisted mainly in the method of its acquisition, in the fact that it was won by war and not awarded by a Court of Arbitration. In other words, if you come by your own as the result of judicial process, your triumph leaves no moral impress ; but if you successfully rob your neighbour by war, the moral effect is portentous. What a gulf between the Prussian of the twentieth, and the great English soldier of the seventeenth century ! " Things obtained by force," said Oliver Cromwell in 1647, " though never so good in themselves, would be both less to their honour, and less likely to last. . . . What we gain in a free way, it is better than twice as much in a forced, and will be

<sup>1</sup> P. 34.

more truly ours and our posterity's." <sup>1</sup> Less likely to last! Doubts of Bernhardt's gospel seem to have haunted von Bülow. "In the meantime," he writes, <sup>2</sup> "Fate, who, as we all know, is an excellent but expensive teacher, might undertake to educate us politically, and that by means of the injuries which our innate political failings must inflict on us again and again. Failings, even political ones, are seldom cured by knowledge, mostly only by experience. Let us hope that the experience, which shall enable us to acquire a political talent in addition to so many other fine gifts, will not be too painful a one." An enemy may concur in von Bülow's aspiration, and the experience which will enable the Germans to acquire a political talent will be the destruction of Prussian militarism at the hands of the Allies.

As yet, nothing has succeeded in Germany like success, and the system of force became the bond of German unity. In the Hohenzollerns and the Army the German has seen his only bulwarks against disruption and his only claim to the respect and fear of the world. That is why his civic soul cringes under the jackboot, and he seeks to solace his self-esteem by humbling little nations. The root of his militarism is his disbelief in his own political aptitude; he vaunts the War Lord, with his "mailed fist" and "shining armour," because he is conscious of the truth in Bernhardt's insolent gibe that no people is less qualified to determine its own political destinies. After all it is human nature to exalt the art in which one excels and to vilify that in which one has failed. Militarism is not merely the price which Germany pays for its political incapacity; it is also the unction with which it flatters its materialistic soul.

Nevertheless, no nation—not even the German—tolerates militarism for its own sake, but only for what it derives therefrom in prestige or tangible profit; and doubts have been growing in the minds of millions of Germans whether

<sup>1</sup> Morley's "Cromwell," p. 224.

<sup>2</sup> P. 105.

militarism was worth the price they had to pay. These doubts are expressed in the growth of the Social Democratic movement, the essence of which is not its socialism at all. "The Social Democratic movement," says von Bülow,<sup>1</sup> "is the antithesis of the Prussian State." But the Prussian State is the most socialistic in Europe, so far as its methods of government are concerned; and the antithesis turns not on socialistic or individualistic principle, but on the question whether the people are to control the State or the State the people, or, in other words, whether Germany is to have a responsible government or not. To Prussian soldiers and ministers, as to the Stuarts, the demand for responsible Government portends the destruction of their State; and in its defence they are prepared to wage a civil or any other war. "From first to last during my term of office," says that mildest of Prussian ministers, von Bülow,<sup>2</sup> "I recognized that the Social Democratic movement constituted a great and serious danger. It is the duty of every German ministry to combat this movement until it is defeated or materially changed. . . . This danger must be faced and met with a great and comprehensive national policy under the strong guidance of clear-sighted and courageous governments, which whether amicably or by fighting can make the parties bow to the might of the national idea."

The "national idea" is the Prussian conception of the State, and the growth of the German revolt against it can be illustrated by a few figures. In 1884 the Social Democrats polled 550,000 votes and secured 24 seats in the Reichstag. In 1912 they polled 4,250,000 votes, secured 110 seats, and emerged from the general election the strongest party in the Reichstag.<sup>3</sup> In 1913, for the first time in its history, the elected representatives of the great German people summoned up courage, over the Zabern incident, to pass a vote of censure on its Government; and before the outbreak of war, it was the common anticipation that at the revision of the Tariff, due

<sup>1</sup> P. 186.<sup>2</sup> Pp. 171, 204.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 167-8.

in 1915, the Prussian Junkers would fail to secure that protection which represents the perquisites most of them get out of the Prussian State. The call was urgent for von Bülow's "great and comprehensive national policy". Probably he was not thinking of war; but Bernhardi has a significant sentence:<sup>1</sup> "We must not think merely of external foes who compel us to fight. A war may seem to be forced upon a statesman by the condition of home affairs."

Here we have at least one explanation of the ever-increasing truculence of German foreign policy. To seek in aggression abroad a remedy for discontent at home is an expedient as old as the State itself, and German aggression has been due to the German Government's fear of the German people. Blood and iron must justify itself to the German nation by its fruits; and German Governments have been forced to seek abroad the means to bribe the German people into acquiescence in the insolence of military rule. Bernhardi speaks of the "obligation" which lies upon the German Government to acquire colonies; "if necessary, they must be obtained as the result of a successful European war," and "the principle of the balance of power must be entirely disregarded"<sup>2</sup>. The megalomania of Germany's ruler made him a suitable exponent of the exigencies of German policy. As far back as 1898 he declared at Damascus:<sup>3</sup> "The 300,000,000 Mohammedans who live scattered over the globe may be assured of this, that the German Emperor will be their friend at all times". Most of these Mohammedans were French or British subjects, and it is not usual for sovereigns to offer their protection to the subjects of other States. It was not because they were German subjects, but because they were not that, as Bernhardi says,<sup>4</sup> "prestige in the Mohammedan world is of the first importance to Germany". Germany was already seeking means to fish in its neighbours' troubled waters, but 100,000 Mohammedans are giving to-day in France an unexpected answer to the Kaiser's invitation.

<sup>1</sup> Bernhardi, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 107, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Bülow, p. 83.

<sup>4</sup> Bernhardi, p. 285.



France has, however, been the nearest victim of Germany's restless provocation. "In one way or another," declares Bernhardt,<sup>1</sup> "we must square our account with France if we wish for a free hand in our international policy. This is the first and foremost condition of a sound German policy, and since the hostility of France once for all cannot be removed by peaceful overtures, the matter must be settled by force of arms. France must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path." If France did not oblige by taking the offensive, she must be jockeyed into war. "We must initiate an active policy which, without attacking France, will so prejudice her interests or those of England, that both these States would feel themselves compelled to attack us."<sup>2</sup> And then, too, of course it would be easy to persuade the United States and other neutrals that Germany was the victim of an envious and revengeful coalition, and that Bernhardt was not serious when he declared in italics that "the maintenance of peace never can or may be the goal of a policy".<sup>3</sup>

Let us think for a moment over the significance of this declaration, made four years ago, that "we must square our account with France," which "must be so completely crushed that she can never again come across our path". That is the German conception of a "square" account; it squares, at least, with German notions of international guarantees and scraps of paper in general. The demand for a square account might seem more natural coming from the other side. In 1870-1 Germany occupied the French capital, marched her armies across to the shores of the ocean, tore away two French provinces, and exacted a vast indemnity. And yet she must be crushed again; Moloch is still insatiate. What a vista, what a comment on the gospel of war! The most crushing victory of modern times is, even so, powerless to effect the bloody purpose of the prophets of the sword. Their chosen weapon has broken in their hands, and war,

<sup>1</sup> Bernhardt, p. 105.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 280.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 37.

even triumphant war, is bankrupt in a generation. No victory is of any use unless the vanquished falls never to rise again; and then the victor, for lack of a foe, is reduced to ignominious peace! It is not, after all, war in which Bernhardt revels; the lust of battle is purity itself compared with the black passions of his heart. If he really believed in war as the sovereign tonic for civilized peoples, he would not clamour for his foes' annihilation; he would rejoice in their recovery and hope to meet again in equal combat a foeman worthy of his steel. No, it is not fair fight and no favour for which the Prussian thirsts; the consuming fire within him is oriental lust for absolute dominion.

It is the recovery of France, which would have been welcomed by a chivalrous enemy, that constitutes her offence in German eyes. She has dared to revive, and, turning her saddened gaze from Alsace and Lorraine, to devote her energies to the building up of a colonial empire second to that of Britain alone. "Our old vice, envy," as von Bülow frankly calls it,<sup>1</sup> is the root of German malice towards France, and perhaps towards Belgium also. "When," writes Bernhardt,<sup>2</sup> "Belgium was proclaimed neutral, no one contemplated that she would lay claim to a large and valuable region of Africa. It may well be asked whether the acquisition of such territory is not *ipso facto* a breach of neutrality; for a State from which—theoretically at least—all danger of war has been removed, has no right to enter into political competition with the other States." This passage almost reduces German politics to a branch of criminology. Belgium is to leave the Congo free for a German scramble because Belgium is "theoretically at least" free from the menace of German invasion! But would the surrender of the Congo State have made it any easier for the German army to advance on Paris across the Vosges instead of through Belgian territory, or have fortified Germany's respect for "scraps of paper"?

<sup>1</sup> Bülow, p. 184.

<sup>2</sup> Bernhardt, p. 110.

With Germany led by such philosophers and guides, the way to war must ever be *facilis descensus Averno*. The point of view of the man in the street was put by a German on the eve of the outbreak: "Germany always wins in war, and always gets something out of it". He knew no more about the rights or wrongs of the dispute, but his knowledge was quite enough. "I beseech you," wrote Cromwell to the Presbyterians who rushed to defeat at Dunbar, "to think it possible that you may be mistaken." When a State like Germany disclaims responsibility to law and ethics, the only guarantee for peace is its fear of defeat in war. Germany had no such fear in a contest with France and Russia, in which she was backed by Austria; and she had no suspicion that Britain would intervene. Hence, when the occasion for war arose, the cause was present in Germany's frame of mind. She believed in war as the sovereign means of national development; she had little doubt of her success, and what risks there were her Government was impelled to take from fear of the Social Democratic menace to the Prussian State. The causes of the war indicate the only sound bases of peace: Germany's faith in the supreme efficacy of war must be undermined, her overweening confidence must be destroyed, and her people must realize the impossibility of satisfactory government under a State which can be driven into war upon others by fear of its own subjects.

It was a similar distrust of its own subjects on the part of Austria that provoked the occasion of the war. There would have been no need to treat the Archduke's assassination as a *casus belli*, had the Austro-Hungarian State enjoyed the confidence of its Bosnian subjects. For, after all, that murder was a crime committed by Austrian subjects. Therein, indeed, lay its terrifying significance for the Austrian Government, and paradoxical though it may seem, there would have been less likelihood of war between Austria and Serbia, had the assassins been Serbian subjects. It was Slav discontent within the Austrian



Empire that drove the Austrian Government to a settlement of accounts with Serbia ; and there is evidence that that determination had been formed before the crime of Serajevo. The root of the evil goes back to Bismarck's Machiavellian encouragement of Austrian expansion at the expense of the Slavs in the Balkans, given with a double intent : firstly to set up a permanent rivalry between Russia and Austria and thus to provide Germany with a firm ally in her own disputes with Russia, and secondly to make Austro-Hungary less and less a Germanic State and thus leave Germany the sole exponent of Teutonic ambitions. The five Austrian duchies, which are almost purely Germanic, with a possible outlet on the Mediterranean, would be Germany's reward for the conversion of the Habsburg monarchy into a non-Germanic state. Hence the Austrian administration and, in 1908, annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

That annexation, carried out in defiance of a European settlement and only made feasible by the weakness of Russia, consequent upon the Manchurian war and domestic revolution, was a blow at the heart of Slav aspirations. It was prepared by a bogus conspiracy, the supposed proofs of which were forged in the Austrian Legation at Belgrade ; and the facts revealed at the famous Friedjung trial make it impossible to accept at its face value the Austrian version of the subsequent murder at Serajevo. The effect of the annexation was to deepen Bosnian discontent, and the success of their Serbian kinsmen in the Balkan wars revived the confidence of Slav aspirations. Serbian prosperity became a menace to the Austrian Empire because Austria had not known how to conciliate Bosnian sentiment ; and every symptom of discontent with Austrian repression was ascribed, not to the defects of Austrian rule, but to the instigation of Serbian intrigue. The nemesis of the Bosnian annexation was that Austria could not feel secure so long as a Serbian State remained independent on its borders to act as a magnet for Slav attraction. It led to increased coercion within the Empire, and pointed to-

wards an ultimate Austrian advance to Salonica. This Austrian threat might have been parried by the maintenance of a Balkan League strong enough to secure the Balkan Peninsula against outside aggression. Unfortunately, in their anxiety to avoid a European conflict, the Powers of the Triple Entente connived at German and Austrian interference to prevent a Balkan settlement which would have satisfied the various members of the Balkan League. Austria was thus provided with the opportunity to break up Balkan unity, and get Serbia, as she thought, at her mercy. But for the refusal of Italy to support her, Austria's ultimatum to Serbia would have been delivered in 1913.

Its terms in 1914 were not intended for acceptance, and the object of military operations was to secure Austria's predominance in the Balkans.<sup>1</sup> Bernhardt's *dictum* that "in no case may a sovereign State renounce the right of interfering in the affairs of other States"<sup>2</sup>—which might have justified Serbian intrigues in Bosnia—was invoked to justify Austria's intervention in Serbia, and then repudiated to condemn the intervention of Russia. Germany insisted that the quarrel was purely a matter for Austria and Serbia to decide, but denied that it was one for Russia and Austria to fight out between them, and suddenly declared war on Russia in order to frustrate the *pourparlers* to which Austria had consented. Protestations that Germany did not take the offensive have flooded neutral countries, and they will be redoubled as the war spreads over German territory. But the verdict of Germany's ally is decisive; on 1 August, Italy's Foreign Minister, the Marquis di San Giuliano, declared:<sup>3</sup> "The war undertaken by Austria, and the consequences which might result had, in

<sup>1</sup> There is an unfortunate misprint in Document No. 90 of the cheap reprint of the British "White Paper", where Sir Edward Grey is made to say: "I observed that, *by* taking territory while leaving nominal Servian independence, Austria might turn Servia practically into a vassal State". "By" should be "without," and it is correctly so printed in the original issue of the "White Paper".

<sup>2</sup> Bernhardt, p. 111.

<sup>3</sup> "White Paper," No. 152.

the words of the German Ambassador himself, an aggressive object. Both were, therefore, in conflict with the purely defensive character of the Triple Alliance, and in such circumstances Italy would remain neutral." Germany herself has never ventured to contend that Italian neutrality was any breach of the Triple Alliance, which it would have been had not Germany been the aggressor.

In this Balkan quarrel, and even in the wider struggle between Teuton and Slav, Britain had no immediate concern, and would certainly not have intervened. There might even have been some sympathy with Germany's apprehension at the growth of Slavonic power. But Germany had already done much to ruin her own contention, and was prompt to complete the work. If the great issue was between Teuton and Slav, what was the point of the Agadir incident and of the menace to Britain's naval supremacy? If self-defence against Russia was her motive, why violate Belgium's neutrality and prepare a "smashing blow" against France? The Russian menace was clearly no more than a pretext for hurrying on *der Tag*. If Germany feared a French attack in the rear, while her face was turned towards Russia, she could have relied on the strength of the Rhine frontier and awaited a French aggression. In that case there need have been no violation of Belgian neutrality or casting of "scraps of paper" to the winds, and there would have been no British intervention. Germany knew well enough that France was unprepared; indeed, that knowledge helped to precipitate war, and the strategy of the "smashing blow" was based on the assumption that it would have to deal with nearer 500,000 than 4,000,000 French troops with proper equipment. One does not expect in modern war to smash 4,000,000 with 1,000,000. Germany's knowledge was not at fault; her colossal blunder arose from her blindness to moral forces. She prostituted her honour at the shrine of military advantage, and learned too late that moral forces heavily weight even the scales of war. The final price the Germans will pay for their militarism will

be due to the fact that they sold their conscience to their General Staff.

The legend of a French plan to attack Germany through Belgium was merely an *ex post facto* excuse for Germany's conduct, for which, even though the legend were true, there would have been no justification, unless Belgium had connived at the breach of her neutrality; and Germany need only have waited for the imputed invasion by France to secure the invaluable assets of Belgian assistance and British neutrality. Germany thinks that preparations, which were not in fact made, on the part of Britain and France to resist a German breach of Belgium's neutrality were in themselves a breach of neutrality, and that defence against Germany is offence to Germany. Her Government was quite aware that France had no possible motive for infringing Belgian neutrality and thus opening a route to Paris, which for more than two years the German General Staff had been convinced was the best. It is incredible that the German Government would not have delayed its attack on France a few days, if it really believed in a French attack upon Belgium; and its belief in its own assertions can only be accepted at the expense of its sanity.

But there is no need to labour the point; the German Government has flatly contradicted itself. On the very day (4 August) on which the German Foreign Office informed its Ambassador in England that it had "absolutely unimpeachable evidence" for the French attack on Belgium, the German Foreign Secretary told the British Ambassador in Berlin that German armies had crossed the Belgian frontier because "they had to advance into France by the quickest and easiest way, so as to be able to get well ahead with their operations and endeavour to strike some decisive blow as early as possible. It was a matter of life and death for them, as if they had gone by the more southern route they could not have hoped, in view of the paucity of roads and the strength of the fortresses, to have got through without formidable opposition,

entailing great loss of time".<sup>1</sup> The militarism of the German Government is profound and fundamental: it thinks truth, honour, and international law can be manipulated and mobilized as though they were armies. Belgium had been the cockpit of Europe for centuries: in 1839 the Powers, including Prussia, guaranteed Belgium's neutrality, hoping thus to preclude the worst danger of European conflict. Relying upon this guarantee, the French concentrated their efforts upon the defence of the Alsace-Lorraine frontier. Germany was thus offered a choice of obstacles, one presented by military science, the other by Germany's honour and international law. She did not hesitate; she cast honour and scraps of paper to the winds, and then pretended that France had done the like. The Imperial Chancellor admitted in the Reichstag the wrong the Germans had done. We agree with him about the wrong; we disagree when he thinks it is for the criminal to fix the amount of his penalty.

It was then, and only then, that Great Britain intervened. Among the endless contradictory legends as to the origin of the war, which Germany has evolved since it became evident that she would be reduced to the defensive, there is the fable of a British conspiracy in which Russia and France were our facile tools. German promptitude is remarkable, but sometimes it is a little too previous. In the German "White Book," prepared after the breach with Russia, but before the breach with England, and translated by Germans into what purports to be English for American consumption, the object is to secure American sympathy for the Germans against the Slav, and the world is told that "shoulder to shoulder with England" Germany "labored incessantly" for the preservation of peace.<sup>2</sup> But war with England followed on the heels of this narrative; truth had to be tuned to the "Hymn of Hate," and England's co-operation with Germany in the cause of peace was transfigured into a conspiracy with Russia and

<sup>1</sup> British "White Paper," Nos. 157, 160.

<sup>2</sup> "Germany's Reasons for War with Russia" (Oxford reprint) p. 137.



France for the purpose of war. Verily, truth, like *kultur*, is to the German the handmaid of the German State.

The continental war was made in Germany ; Great Britain's intervention was our own affair. We might have stood aloof, and Germany tried to purchase our connivance in her crime. We were not, in the strict letter of international law, bound to intervene. What the Treaty of 1839 does is to bind its signatories not to violate Belgian neutrality, and to give each one of them the right to intervene in case of violation by another. Great Britain, by standing aloof, would have countenanced but not committed a violation of international law ; intervention was a moral and not a legal obligation. It was, therefore, a debt of honour, and its repudiation would have destroyed her credit ; her treaties would have become, indeed, mere scraps of paper, and her name a byword and reproach. It is true that no nation has been without reproach in the past ; but if one is to wait to do right until one can do right with a conscience void of offence in the past, one will never do right at all ; and criminal precedents are no justification for crime. We should have suffered ignominy, even if Russia and France had succeeded without our assistance. If they had failed, we should have lost our honour without the miserable compensation of ignoble security. An enormous indemnity would have been extorted from France and devoted to building German super-Dreadnoughts. Dutch integrity would have followed Belgian into Germany's ravenous maw ; for, as their statesmen have obligingly pointed out, they "could not profitably annex Belgian territory without making at the same time territorial acquisitions at the expense of Holland".<sup>1</sup> Sooner or later *der Tag* would have come for us as well as for France and Russia, and we should have had to fight for existence with a foe of doubled power but without our Allies' help.

From that at least we are saved ; and it is more to the point to consider our attitude in the event of victory. It is

<sup>1</sup> British " White Paper," No. 157.

ill counting one's chickens before they are hatched, but at least one may venture a protest against some popular forms of enumeration ; and nothing could be more unwise than the disposition to make the Kaiser a scapegoat for Germany's sins. His responsibility is heavy, and no one need fear that retribution will be light. But we are dealing with States ; our contention is that the German people, misled and deceived as they doubtless have been, have yet lent themselves to and supported this crime against civilization ; and some of them have been far more eager than the Kaiser himself to commit it. It is none of our business or that of our Allies to fix the redistribution of the responsibility between the various elements in the German State ; that is a matter of internal politics, and must be left to the German people themselves. It will be no concern of ours if after the war they think they have had enough of the Hohenzollerns, and deal with the Kaiser as their friends, the young Turks, dealt with their Sultan Abdul. The penalty must be imposed on Germany as a whole, and the German people must be left to share it among themselves. The different course adopted, perhaps inevitably, with Napoleon in 1815 had deplorable results. His exile at St. Helena turned French sympathy in his favour, and led to the growth of the Napoleonic legend. On that legend the Second Empire was largely based, and the Second Empire was partly responsible for the Franco-Prussian war, from which this greater war has flowed. Any attempt on the part of the Allies to mete out similar treatment to the Kaiser would have like results. His punishment must be left to German hands ; if the German people choose to absolve him and shoulder the burden themselves, they must be allowed to do so. It is, however, unlikely that they will be in a forgiving mood, and the lightest penalty that will result from a German defeat will be the loss by the Hohenzollerns of their irresponsible power.

Our second caution refers to Alsace-Lorraine. The guiding principle of any settlement must be popular consent, and it is probable that a plebiscite taken after a French victory

would restore those provinces to France. It does not follow that that would be the wisest course. Alsace and Lorraine were German before they were French, and re-annexation would leave a large and discontented minority. The borders of France and Germany would still march together, and fear of a German *revanche* would continue to haunt the peace of Europe and speed the race for armaments. These provinces are a real borderland with a divided allegiance which cannot be wholly satisfied in one or the other scale. It might be better to recognize the fact, and not attempt to impose either nationality. If Alsace-Lorraine were neutralized, and connected by some federal bond for purposes of defence with Luxemburg, Belgium, and Holland on the one hand, and with Switzerland on the other, there would be a complete and continuous barrier between the rival claimants, and Western Europe would enjoy a secure prospect of permanent peace.

The objection will at once be made that the fate of Belgium proves the worthlessness of guaranteed neutrality. But this objection ignores two fundamental points. In the first place, we are considering arrangements contingent upon a victory for the Allies; and if they win, the penalty inflicted for the breach of Belgium's neutrality will be enough to deter any power from following German examples for several generations. Secondly, Germany was only tempted to violate Belgian neutrality by the fact that she could violate it without violating the neutrality of any other State. Belgium would not have suffered that violation had she retained her union with Holland, established at the Congress of Vienna; and neither Germany nor any other power would have dreamt, or would dream, of violating a neutrality which comprehended within its scope Holland, Belgium, Luxemburg, Alsace-Lorraine, and Switzerland. None of these States entertains any military design save that of defence, or cherishes any ambition save that of peaceful development; they might be well content to pool their arrangements for defence and thus promote their peaceful development.

The application of the principles of nationality and govern-



ment by consent to the problems of Eastern Europe is too complex a matter to be discussed in a lecture; and the soundness of the general principle is too obvious to require elaboration. Its denial has been the poison of the European system, and the bond of iniquity between Germany and her Allies. Turkey, says Bernhardi, is the "natural" ally of Germany; and the similarity of their proceedings in Armenia and Belgium illustrates that natural affinity. Each of the partners is a militarist State, repudiating the principle of responsible government, and ruling by coercion heterogeneous nationalities. They are bound together by a common interest, and that interest is fatal to the peace and comfort of European peoples. These governments are forced to apply the methods of military coercion to large sections of their own subjects; and from the dragooning of their own subjects it is but a step to dragooning those of other States. From plaguing Germany, militarism has spread like a plague over Europe, and its noxious effects have been felt to the uttermost ends of the earth.

Indeed, while nationality lies deep in the problems of this war, it is something far more profound than a war of nation against nation. It is the great civil war of the human race, and upon its issue depend the principles of the government of men. No nation can live to itself in selfish isolation. All are members of the great society, and each one stands for something in that social intercourse. Germany stands, by her own presumptuous boast, for the mailed fist and shining armour, for the law of nature, "red in tooth and claw," for the limitless rights of might. On the throne of the Prince of Peace they have crowned the God of War, and their Christmas carols are drowned in the discord of hymns of hate. For what do we stand? We are told that we are fighting German culture. The word is a somewhat ambiguous term, and the charge is one we can bear with some equanimity. But we are not fighting the culture of Goethe and Schiller, of Lessing and Kant. That was destroyed long since by the Prussians themselves;

and, to quote words I wrote twelve years ago,<sup>1</sup> "in the Germany of the nineteenth, as in that of the sixteenth century an era of liberal thought closed in a fever of war; the persuasions of sweetness and light were drowned by the beat of the drum and the blare of the trumpet; and methods of blood and iron supplanted the forces of reason". We are not seeking the destruction of German culture; we hope to be the means of its resurrection when its destroyer is vanquished.

We stand "for scraps of paper," for the sanctity of international honour, for the security of the little nations. No one pretends or desires to make the nations of the world equal in strength or political weight, any more than anyone dreams of making equal the physical strength of individual men and women. But we all know that the greatest achievement of civilization is this: that physical strength is not used to terrorize physical weakness. It is excellent to have a giant strength, it is tyrannous to use it like a giant: and under the shield of civilization the weakest as well as the strongest, man or woman, goes about his duty with equal security. So we take our stand by the integrity and independence of the least of the little nations, to whom we owe so much in religion, literature, science, and art; and we contend that they, trusting to scraps of paper with our superscription, should not fear the power of mailed fists and shining armour, but continue in peace to serve their day and generation.

It is a war of principles and of ideals. We believe in political, no less than in religious, toleration. German politics stand for eternal intolerance. Hammer and anvil, anvil and hammer—such, it appears, must ever be the relation of State to State. It is an old German antithesis: "either he or I," said Luther of his fellow-Protestant, Zwingli, "must be the devil's minister". Either France or Germany, say his modern disciples, must go to the wall. Until one Church had learnt to put up with the existence of other Churches, there could be

<sup>1</sup> "Cambridge Modern History," II, 278-9.

no religious peace; and until Germany has learnt or been taught to tolerate, not merely the existence but also the wealth and strength of its neighbours, there can be no peace upon earth and goodwill towards men. The gospel according to Germany involves a denial of every international principle and every idea save that of force; it opens a vista of ceaseless war, or of war that can only cease with the destruction of Prussian militarism or the subjection of every State to Prussian dictation.

Against this whole system of Prussian politics we have taken our stand. We have done so with deliberation, and it is we who declared war in defence of our honour and civilization against the invaders of Belgium. It is no service to England's reputation to dissemble that fact or deny that she did her duty by choice and not by compulsion. We did our duty, not because we had no option, but because it was our duty; and we refused the German bribes to keep the peace. We are most of us lovers of peace, but not at Germany's price. That is the pacifism of the policeman who turns his back while Naboth is stoned to death and his vineyard robbed; and the supreme value of our action does not consist in the fact that this particular Naboth will be recompensed and restored. It consists in the fact that the peoples of the world will have the assurance of deeds, which speak louder than words, that we will do the like again whenever another Ahab covets his neighbour's vineyard.

"But have you counted the cost?" asked the German Imperial Chancellor; "has the British Government thought of that?" Yes, we have counted the cost, and we pay the price on many a stricken field, in many a desolate home. But we also thought of the pangs of conscience involved in the great betrayal. While Reims was being ruined and Louvain levelled with the dust, and pitiful, penniless, fugitives flocked to our shores with their records of deeds of shame, the doers thereof would, if we had stood aloof, have overwhelmed us with felicitations upon our wisdom, our prudence, and our discretion; and

we should have been racked with the doubt that, but for our inaction, these things might not have been. We have not, indeed, prevented the spoiler, but for every deed we shall help to exact the last farthing of retribution; and our honour remains intact. Yes, we have counted the cost; and the heart of England goes out to those who suffer and those who sorrow. And yet our mother country looks upon the travail of her soul and is content. For in the fullness and depth of her compassion, she can say to each one of her afflicted children, in the words of the old cavalier poet, which also express the profoundest of the truths upon which this empire is based, and for which this war is now fought :—

I could not love thee, dear, so much  
Loved I not honour more.



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